

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEHRAN 08085 241326Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 SY-05
MCT-02 /083 W
-----095235 250109Z /64

R 241147Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 01
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 8085

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, IR
SUBJ: POLITICAL SCENE ON EVE OF RAMAZAN DEEP MOURNING

REF: A) TEHRAN 8012 B) TEHRAN 8013

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SUMMARY: CYCLE OF VIOLENCE ABATED SLIGHTLY ON EVE OF DAYS
OF DEEP MOURNING, AS IRAN ABSORBS ABADAN TRAGEDY. MASS
BURIAL AUGUST 22 WAS SCENE OF HYSTERIA AND GRIEF, COVERED
EXTENSIVELY BY LOCAL PRESS. DETAILS OF INCIDENT REMAIN UN-
CLEAR; ABADAN POLICE CHIEF WAS SUMMONED TO TEHRAN TO
REPORT. MORE RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAVE CONDEMNED ACTION OF
TERRORISTS, BUT SPORADIC VIOLENCE CONTINUES. END SUMMARY

1. ON EVE OF DEEP MOURNING (AUGUST 24-26) OF RAMAZAN, IRAN
IS TRYING TO ABSORB IMPACT OF ABADAN CINEMA DISASTER
(REF A). KAYHAN GAVE HEAVY COVERAGE TO EMOTIONAL SCENE OF
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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 08085 241326Z

MASS BURIAL AUGUST 22 OF VICTIMS, MANY STILL UNIDENTIFIED.
POLICE CHIEF GENERAL REZA RAZMI HAS BEEN SUMMONED TO
TEHRAN "TO REPORT." PRESS QUOTED HIM AS SAYING THAT
POLICE NOW THINK TERRORISTS USED INCENDIARY BOMBS RATHER
THAN GASOLINE. WE UNDERSTAND SPECIAL COMMISSION REPORT
WILL CRITICIZE RAZMI FOR FAILURE TO TAKE ADEQUATE PRE-
CAUTIONS AND SECURITY MEASURES. FRENCH LANGUAGE JOURNAL

DE TEHRAN REPORTS POLICE HAVE ARRESTED PERPETRATORS, BUT OTHER MEDIA DO NOT CORROBORATE. TEHRAN JOURNAL STATES POLICE ARRESTED FOUR MEN WHO HAD EXPLOSIVES, BUT THIS WAS BEFORE THEATER FIRE. DETAILS STILL UNCLEAR: CINEMA OWNER NOW CLAIMS INFAMOUS LOCKED DOOR WAS UNLOCKED. SPECIAL INVESTIGATION COMMISSION REPORTEDLY WILL SHOW DOOR WAS LOCKED, GAS SUFFOCATED MANY SPECTATORS BEFORE THEY COULD ESCAPE, AND INCENDIARY EFFORT WAS WELL PREPARED.

2. MORE RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAVE ISSUED STATEMENTS CONDEMNING INCIDENT. AYATOLLAH SALEHI KERMANI OF KERMAN STATED SUCH ATROCITIES ARE UNACCEPTABLE TO TRUE MUSLIMS. AYATOLLAH ABTAHI OF ISFAHAN CALLED IT ONE OF THE MOST TRAGIC INCIDENTS SINCE SECOND WORLD WAR, AND SAID ONLY FASCIST ELEMENTS COULD HAVE COMMITTED THIS CRIME.

3. OPPOSITIONISTS CONTINUE TO SPREAD RUMOR THAT FIRE WAS SOMEHOW PERPETRATED BY GOI, CITING SHODDY POLICE AND FIRE BRIGADE WORK AND DELAY IN REPORTING NEWS NATIONALLY. NEWEST WRINKLE IS SUGGESTION THAT OSCO, WESTERN OIL CONSORTIUM'S SERVICE COMPANY, WAS BEHIND FIRE AS PART OF EFFORT TO DISRUPT IRAN AND MAKE IT AN EASIER TARGET IN OIL NEGOTIATIONS. TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, NO RPT NO SERIOUS OBSERVER OF TRAGEDY HAS SUGGESTED THERE IS ANY MERIT IN THESE STORIES, BUT LIKE MOST OPPOSITION-INSPIRED POLITICAL RUMORS, THEY HAVE SPREAD AROUND QUITE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 TEHRAN 08085 241326Z

A BIT, HAVING APPEARED IN MAJOR CITIES ELSEWHERE IN IRAN. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE - BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL

4. SHIRAZ ARRESTED TWO YOUTHS ATTEMPTING TO PLANT EXPLOSIVES IN ROOF OF PASARGADE CINEMA. 12 YEAR OLD BOY SAW PAIR AT WORK AND REPORTED THEM TO POLICE WHO THEN ROUNDED THEM UP. ONE INDIVIDUAL WAS DESCRIBED AS A 20-YEAR OLD WHO WAS WEARING A WIG AND REPORTEDLY A MEMBER OF THE LITERACY CORPS. PRESS MORNING AUGUST 24 CARRIED SMALL ITEM ON EVENT, WHICH SAID PAIR WERE ALSO BELIEVED TO BE IN PROCESS OF PLANTING BOMB IN ADJOINING THEATER AS WELL. SECURITY SOURCES INDICATE METRO CINEMA IN SHIRAZ HAS ALSO BEEN THREATENED.

5. THOUGH NUMBER OF INCIDENTS HAS DIMINISHED, THEY STILL CONTINUE. FIRE OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN DESTROYED 30 SHOPS IN SOUTHER TEHRAN'S VEGETABLE MARKET MORNING AUGUST 23 BUT THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES. EXPLOSION AND FIRE IN TABRIZ SHOP AUGUST 22 KILLED ONE PERSON AND INJURED TWO OTHERS. IN GOUCHAN, FIRE BADLY DAMAGED AN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE COMPANY, WHILE IN ILAM, FIRE SET BY FOUR UNIDENTIFIED MEN DESTROYED RESTAURANT BUILT ENTIRELY OF NATURAL WOOD.

6. CHECK AROUND TEHRAN AND WITHOUT BETTER-INFORMED
DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES INDICATES NO RPT NO NEW UNSETTLING
INCIDENTS AS OF 1500 LOCAL TIME. RUMORS ABOUND, HOWEVER,
INCLUDING VAGUE SUGGESTIONS THAT SOME HOTELS AND AIR
TRANSPORT MAY BE TARGETS. GOI AND MOST OF COUNTRY,
INCLUDING U.S. MISSION, ARE AT HIGH LEVEL OF ALERT
AGAINST VIOLENCE.
SULLIVAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECURITY, REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TEHRAN08085
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780347-0858
Format: TEL
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780826/aaaaavlo.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e747105c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 TEHRAN 8012, 78 TEHRAN 8013
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1628191
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICAL SCENE ON EVE OF RAMAZAN DEEP MOURNING
TAGS: PINS, ASEC, IR
To: STATE DIA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e747105c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014